Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program

2014 Overview Panelist Handbook

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THE LAURA BUSH 21ST CENTURY *(LB21)* LIBRARIAN PROGRAM GRANTS REVIEW PROCESS

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Grant overview panel reviewer. We have selected you to review this year's applications because of your expertise in one of the competitive categories of funding for libraries and archives.

The staff at the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) has prepared this handbook to ensure fair and candid review of all eligible applications. It will provide you with the procedural information you need. Please use it in conjunction with this year's *Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Grant Application and Guidelines* (*LB21 Guidelines*) available on our website at: http://www.imls.gov/applicants/lb21_guidelines_2014.aspx

Even if you have reviewed for other IMLS programs in the past you should read through this booklet since we make changes each year that may impact your reviews.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF LAURA BUSH 21ST CENTURY LIBRARIAN PROGRAM

The Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program (LB21) invests in the nation's information infrastructure by funding projects designed to address the education and training needs of the professionals who help build, maintain, and provide public access to the world's wide-ranging information systems and sources.

In 2014, the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program will support projects to develop faculty and library leaders, recruit and educate the next generation of librarians and archivists, conduct research, build institutional capacity in graduate schools of library and information science, and assist in the professional development of librarians and archivists. This grant program is especially interested in developing information professionals who can help manage the burgeoning data generated by the nation's researchers, serve as stewards of the nation's cultural legacy, and meet the information needs of the underserved. The program also seeks to help librarians develop the information and digital literacy of their communities, as well as other critical skills their users will need to be successful in the 21st century.

This program addresses the field's need to conduct research on the library and information science profession. It also seeks to advance the work of new faculty in library and information science by supporting an early career development program for untenured, tenure-track faculty. Research conducted under the early careers program should be in the faculty member's particular research area and is not restricted to research on the profession.

THE LB21 PROGRAM

The Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Grant program (LB21) provides Federal grants through an annual, competitive process. In the LB21 program:
- Applications are evaluated by peers;
- Evaluations are based on the application's strength in proving that the applicant:
    - Demonstrates impact as defined in the *LB21 Guidelines;*
    - Meets applicable evaluation criteria as outlined in the *LB21 Guidelines*;
    - Addresses one of the categories for this funding cycle as explained in the *LB21 Guidelines*; and
    - Aligns with IMLS strategic goals.

APPLICATION AND REVIEW PROCESS

1. Applicants review the *Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Grant Application and Guidelines* and submit proposals to IMLS.
2. IMLS receives the grant applications, checks them for eligibility and completeness.
3. IMLS identifies a pool of technical field reviewers and assigns qualified professionals to evaluate each application.
4. Technical field reviewers evaluate the applications and submit comments using the IMLS Online Reviewer System.
5. If necessary, IMLS will host a conference call to discuss those proposals that received significant variance in reviewer evaluations.
6. IMLS processes technical field reviewer comments and scores, and ranks the applications. The ranking will be used to determine which applications are sent to the overview panel.
7. Overview panelists review applications prior to coming together for consideration in person.
8. Overview panelists meet in person to consider recommended proposals and make funding recommendations.
9. IMLS Director makes final funding decisions.
10. IMLS staff notifies successful applicants.
11. IMLS provides feedback to all applicants.

How Your Reviews Are Used

Your comments and scores as an overview panelist reviewer are an important part of this process. They will provide feedback on proposals to assist in the funding decisions made by the Director of IMLS.

If a panel-reviewed application is not funded, your review comments assist the applicant in revising their application for future submission. Unsuccessful applicants often use reviewer comments to improve or revise their applications for resubmission.

APPLICATION REVIEW INSTRUCTIONS

Verify Access to Applications Online

You will use two online systems:
1.   ApplicationsOnline: An online file sharing system used to download proposals and supporting materials.
2.   IMLS Online Review System: A system to enter your evaluative comments and scores for each proposal.

Instructions for downloading applications are included as **Appendix I** of this handbook. Use the following link to verify that you have access to all your assigned applications:

http://applicationsonline.imls.gov

For "User," enter the name given by IMLS program staff, and for the "Password," refer to the password that was included in the email you received from us. Contact us immediately if any applications are missing or if you cannot open them.

TIME REQUIRED

Experienced reviewers estimate that it takes two to three hours to evaluate one application. If you are a first time reviewer you may need more time. We recommend the reviewing process outlined on the following pages.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Before we assigned proposals for you to read, we provided you a list of applicants and asked you to identify any conflicts of interest. Once you begin reviewing your assigned applications, if you discover any previously unidentified potential conflict, contact us immediately. Please see the Reviewer Conflict of Interest Statement included as **Appendix II** of this handbook. A conflict of interest would arise if you have a financial interest in whether or not the proposal is funded, or if for some reason, you feel that you cannot review it objectively.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The information contained in grant applications is strictly confidential. Do not discuss or reveal names, institutions, project activities or any other information contained in the applications. Contact IMLS if you have any questions concerning an application—do not contact an applicant directly.

READ APPLICATIONS

Your thorough reading and understanding of each application will be the key to providing both insightful comments and an overall rating for the application. In advance of reading, please review the LB21 guidelines at http://www.imls.gov/applicants/lb21_guidelines_2014.aspx

The below section EVALUATING APPLICATIONS is one you may wish to print and place in your workspace. It lists the types of information you should look for in each applicant's responses and should serve as guideposts for your review.

APPLICATION COMPLETENESS

Check your applications to make sure that all required information is included. There are page limits on certain sections (10 pages for Narrative, 2 pages for each resume) and IMLS truncates submissions that run longer. *If any application appears to be incomplete beyond these circumstances, contact IMLS immediately.*

EVALUATING APPLICATIONS

The IMLS Online Reviewer System will require you to provide summary evaluative comments for each of the review criteria. Please consider the following questions when writing comments.

Alignment with IMLS Strategic Goals
Does the proposal align with one of the IMLS strategic goals?
1.   Learning
2.   Community
3.   Content
4.   Access
5.   Model Public Agency

Needs Assessment
- Does the literature review include relevant research and/or projects?
- Does the needs assessment clearly articulate the project audience and its needs?
- Do project activities and goals directly address the needs of the identified audience?

- Is the rationale for this research fully explained?

Impact
- Does the project increase the number of qualified professionals for employment as librarians?
- Does it build greater skills and abilities in the library and archives workforce?
- Will it contribute to results or products that benefit multiple institutions and diverse constituencies?
- Will project outcomes meet library service needs not only in the communities served but also be generalizable to libraries of similar size and type?
- Will this project transform practice? Innovative approaches will be given high consideration.

Project Design and Evaluation Plan
- Are the methodology and design appropriate to the scope of the project?
- Does the proposal clearly articulate research questions and adequately address timeline & personnel?
- Does it include details of sampling logic (size, scope), data collection and analysis methodologies?
- Does the evaluation plan explain how the results are likely to be valid, reliable or generalizable?
- Does the evaluation plan include a description of how the study results will be assessed?

Project Resources: Budget, Personnel and Management Plan
- Are resources appropriate to meet the project goals?
- Do personnel have appropriate experience and will they commit adequate time to the project?
- If the project includes a partnership, is there evidence that all partners are active contributors to and beneficiaries of the partnership activities?

Diversity
- Does the proposal identify the diversity of communities served?
- Does it address the library service needs of those communities, particularly the needs of traditionally underserved groups and/or communities?

Communication Plan
- Will results, products, models, findings, processes, and benefits of this project be communicated effectively to the library field and to other professional organizations and communities?

- Do the communities described in the Needs Assessment section benefit?

Sustainability Plan
- Do the project's benefits continue beyond the grant period?
- For projects involving distance education, do project plans address issues of copyright and use restriction on the course and course content during and after the grant period?
- Are there plans for preservation and maintenance of course and course content during and after the expiration of the grant period?

IMLS 2012-2016 Strategic Goals

Reviewers should also assess how well the proposal aligns with the IMLS 2012-2016 strategic goals. Reviewers can find detailed information by reviewing "Creating a Nation of Learners", available at http://www.imls.gov/about/strategic_plan.aspx

The top three strategic goals are:
1.   IMLS places the learner at the center and supports engaging experiences in libraries and museums that prepare people to be full participants in their local communities and our global society.
2.   IMLS promotes museums and libraries as strong community anchors that enhance civic engagement, cultural opportunities, and economic vitality.
3.   IMLS supports exemplary stewardship of museum and library collections and promotes the use of technology to facilitate discovery of knowledge and cultural heritage.

What are the important characteristics of successful LB21 applications?

Broad Impact: Proposals should address key needs and challenges that face libraries and/or archives. The project should show the potential for far-reaching impact, influence practice throughout the library and/or archival communities, and reflect awareness and support of current strategic initiatives and agendas in these fields.

Innovation: The proposal should demonstrate a thorough understanding of current practice and knowledge about the subject matter and show how the project has the potential to strengthen and improve library and/or archive services to benefit the audiences and communities being served.

Collaboration: While partnerships are not required, they can help demonstrate a broad need, field-wide buy-in and input, access to appropriate expertise, and sharing of resources.

Supporting National Initiatives

IMLS invites libraries and museums to address STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) in their programs and projects in order to advance learning and support the acquisition of STEM knowledge at all ages, but particularly for at-risk youth.

Scoring Each Application

After you have finished writing evaluative comments for each section of the proposal, use the **Application Overview** section to provide an overall numeric score and to add feedback not tied to a specific evaluation criterion. Please make sure numeric scores are supported by the corresponding evaluative comments. The following rating scale should be used for scoring.

High Priority (3) – The applicant's response provides excellent support for each of the evaluation criteria through the proposed activities. It strongly demonstrates potential to elevate or provide strategic impact to museum, archival, and library practice within the context of national strategic initiatives. These applications fulfill to the fullest extent the goals of the LB21 program. Use only for the highest quality applications that in your judgment IMLS should fund this year.

Medium Priority (2) - The applicant's response provides solid support for each of the evaluation criteria. Strategic impact is present but in your judgment should not be the highest IMLS funding priority this year. In your opinion the project is potentially fundable but only after higher priority proposals have been considered.

Low Priority (1) – In your judgment the proposed project is not an important funding priority for this program, or requires substantial revisions to be competitive for funding. This score does not necessarily reflect upon the quality of the written proposal. Evaluators who assign this score should be sure to provide supporting comments explaining why you think the project should not be considered for funding this year.

QUALITIES OF A GOOD PROPOSAL

A good LB21 proposal should:
- Demonstrate impact as defined in the Guidelines
- Successfully address each criterion
- Address goals for the appropriate category (Refer to the Guidelines.)
- Align with the IMLS strategic goals

READ APPLICATIONS

Read your applications to develop a feel for the range of responses. Take notes as you read. Read each application again.

WRITE COMMENTS

Reread the evaluation criteria. Draft comments that reflect your judgment for each of the evaluation criteria. <u>Write them in a word processor and then copy and paste into the online review system.</u>
Submit final scores for assigned applications no later than the deadline. Please remember to print a copy of each completed review to keep for your files.

If you have any questions about reviewing, please contact Mary Alice Ball at (202) 653-4730; Sandra Toro at (202)-653-4662; Tim Carrigan at (202)653-4639; Mary Sellers (202)-653-4689.

GOOD COMMENTS

Some of the characteristics of good comments are:

- Presented in a constructive manner
- Concise, specific, easy to read and understand
- Specific to the individual applicant
- Reflect the professionalism of the reviewer
- Correlate with the rating that is given
- Acknowledge the resources of the institution
- Reflect the application's strengths and identify areas for improvement

Remember: Successful and unsuccessful applicants use your comments to improve their awards or future applications!

POOR COMMENTS

Comments that are considered poor are vague, irrelevant, insensitive, or unclear. These comments actually hinder the evaluation process rather than help it.

To avoid making poor comments, DO NOT:

- Penalize an applicant because you feel the institution doesn't need the money—remember, any eligible institution may apply for and receive LB21 funds, regardless of need.

- Penalize an applicant because of missing materials, unless you have determined that the materials are missing from the original application. If you are missing required materials, contact IMLS immediately.
- Make derogatory remarks—offer suggestions for improvement rather than harsh criticism.
- Question an applicant's honesty or integrity. You may question the accuracy of information provided by the applicant; if you are unsure how to phrase your concerns, contact IMLS.

THE ONLINE REVIEWER SYSTEM

All reviewers will use the Online Reviewer System to submit their comments and scores. Listed in Appendix III are the general steps for using the Online Reviewer System. *Please note that this is a legacy system that has a number of flaws. We highly recommend that you read these steps before you start.*

Begin by writing comments and scores for proposals in a word processing document for later transfer to the Online Reviewer System. This document will be an invaluable resource in case of system failure. When you have completed assigning scores and giving comments for each application assigned to you, you will submit the entire review to IMLS. It is essential to the review calendar that you complete and submit all reviews by the deadline.

Appendix I

# Using the IMLS Applications Online System to Download Applications for Review

Introduction

These instructions will help you locate and download all the applications you will be reading as an NLG reviewer. Be sure to download all the applications to your own workstation so that you can perform your work.

Accessing the Online System

To begin, go to http://applicationsonline.imls.gov

You will be taken to the login screen as seen below.
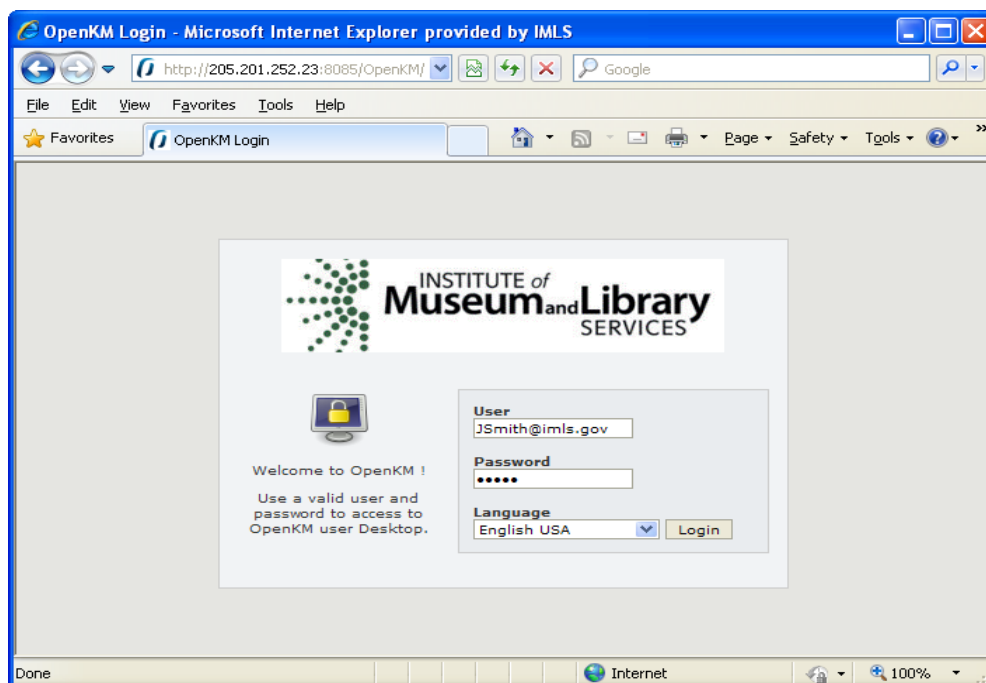

Enter the User and Password information provided to you in the same email in which you received this handbook.

You may need to click through a few error messages. On the left side of the next screen, **click on the section tab "My Documents"** (the guy with the blue shirt) to generate a list of files available for download.
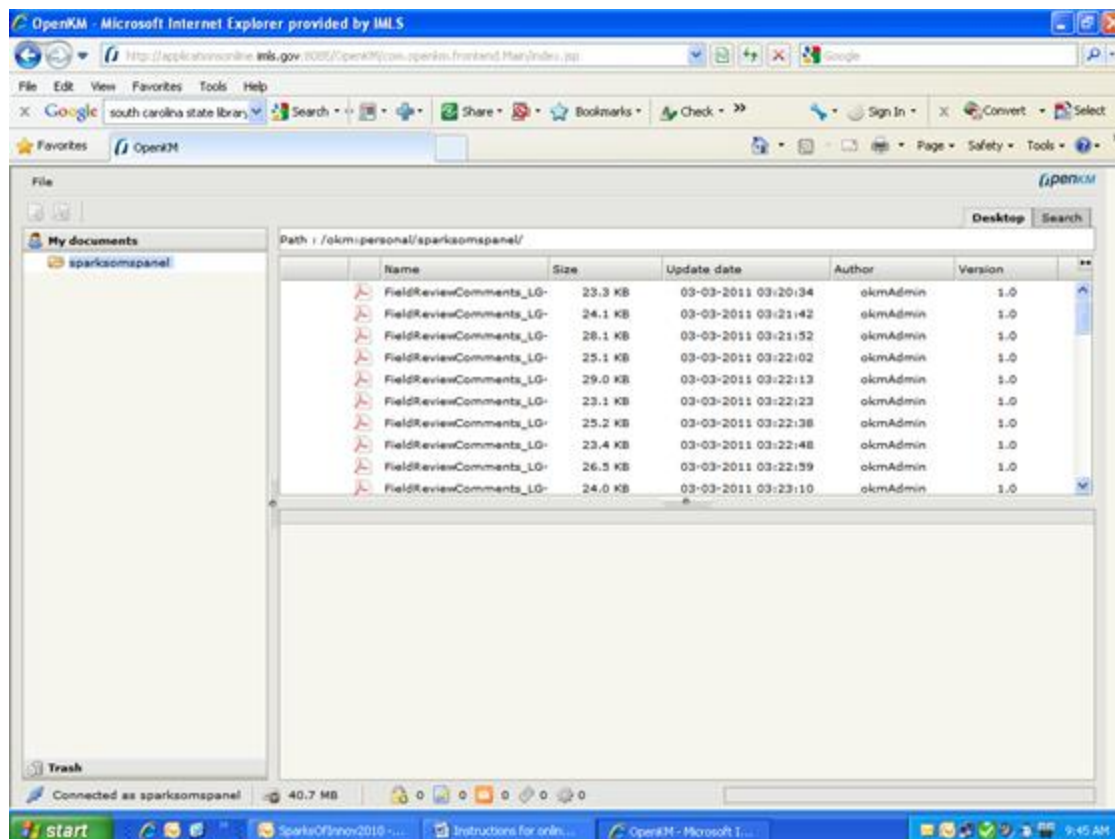
Here you will find all the applications for your review. By double clicking on each one, you can open and save the document to your computer.

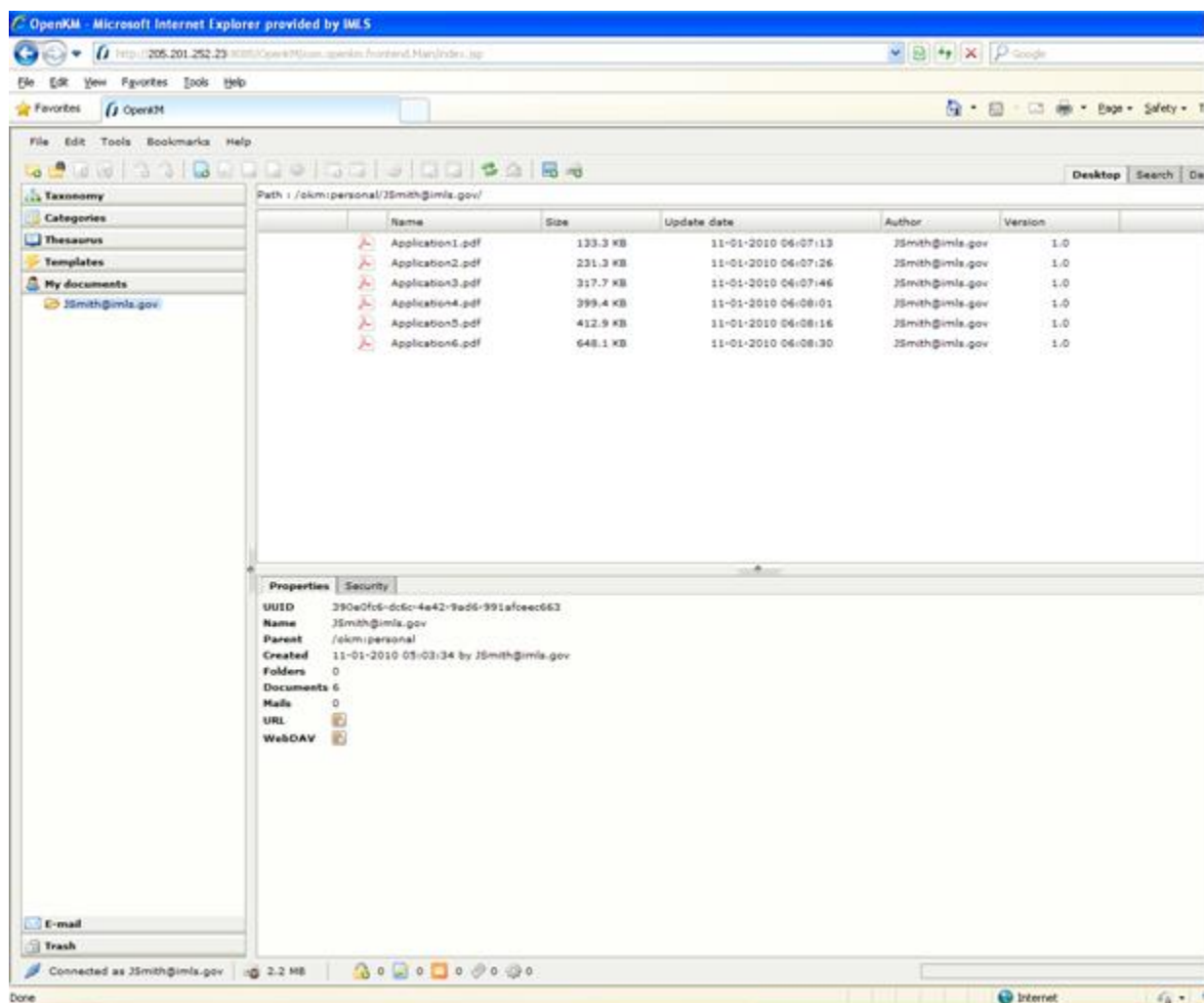You may get an Internet Explorer warning message like the following:
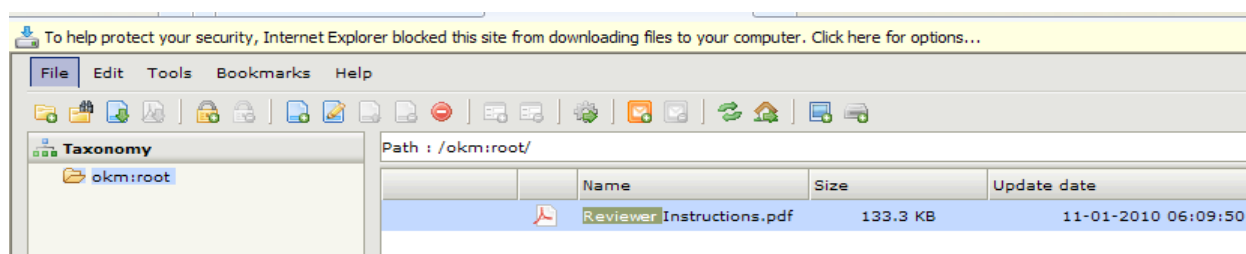
If you receive the warning message that Internet Explorer blocked the download:
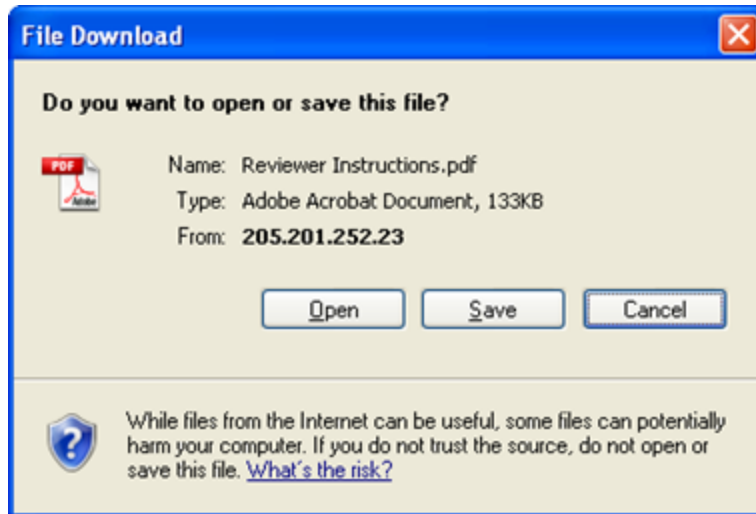   Right click on the yellow message bar for options.
    Click on 'Download File' like the following.

Once you have allowed downloads, you may have to click My Documents again to see the list and begin accessing files.
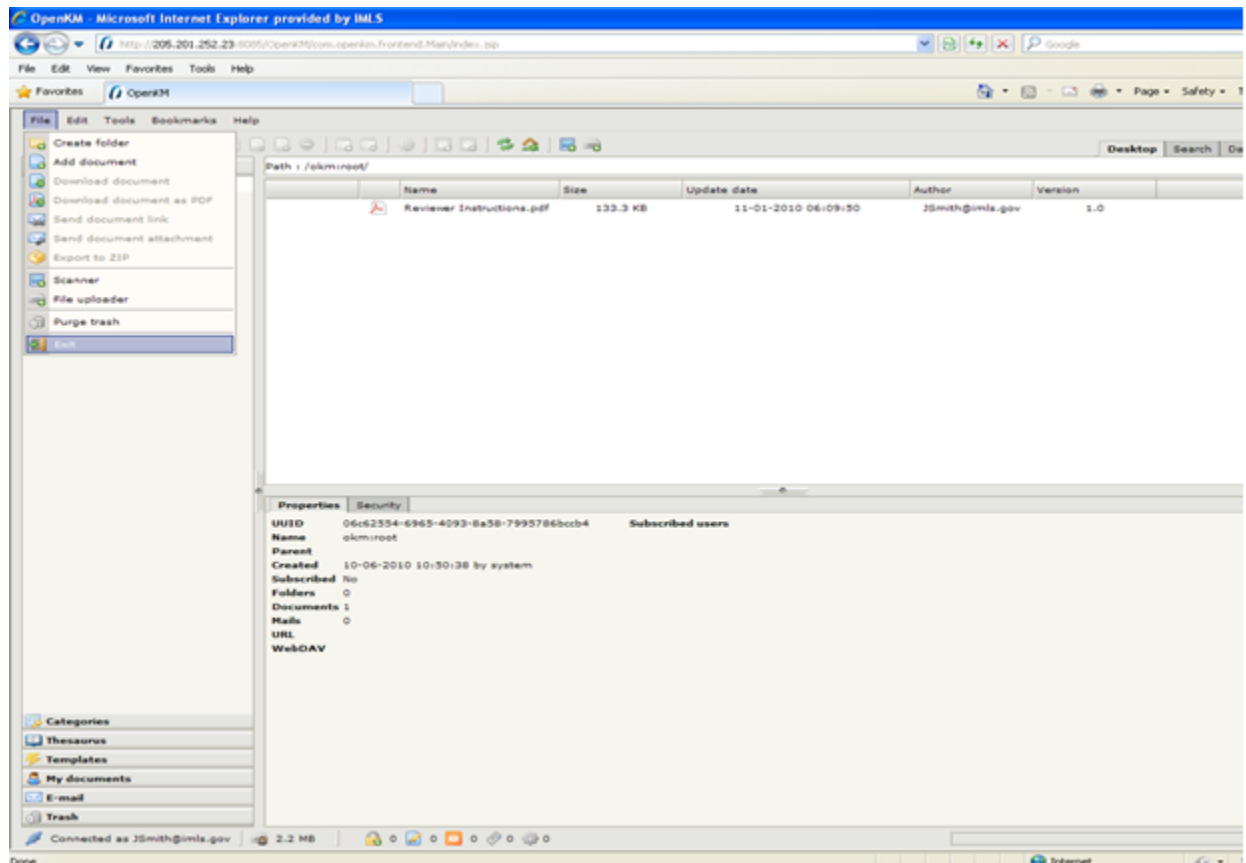

The File Download dialog box should open. Click on Save and it will open the save window.

Save the document in a convenient place, so that you can refer to it when needed.

Return to the 'My documents' section, to open and save the remaining files to your computer.

Once you finished saving all the files, click on File, and then click Exit.

Click on 'Close' to completely log off from the system.

Appendix II

Reviewer Conflict of Interest Statement

As a reviewer or panelist for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), you may receive for review a grant application that could present a conflict of interest. Such a conflict could arise if you are involved with the applicant institution, or in the project described in the application, as a paid consultant or through other financial involvement. The same restrictions apply if your spouse or minor child is involved with the applicant institution or if the application is presented on behalf of an institution with which you, your spouse, or minor child is negotiating for future employment.

A present financial interest is not the only basis for conflict of interest. Through prior association as an employee or officer, you may have gained knowledge of the applicant that would preclude objective review of its application. Past employment (generally more than five years) does not by itself disqualify a reviewer so long as the circumstances of your association permit you to perform an objective review of the application. If you believe you may have a conflict of interest with any application assigned to you for review, please notify us immediately.

You may still serve as a reviewer even if your institution is an applicant in this grant cycle or you were involved in an application submitted in this grant cycle, as long as you do not review any application submitted by your own institution or any application in which you were involved. However, if you believe that these or any other existing circumstances may compromise your objectivity as a reviewer, please notify us immediately.

If an application presents no conflict of interest at the time you review it, a conflict of interest may still develop later on. Once you have reviewed an application, you should never represent the applicant in dealings with IMLS or another Federal agency concerning the application, or any grant that may result from it.

It is not appropriate, for your purposes or for the purposes of the institutions or organizations you represent, for you to make specific use of confidential information derived from individual applications that you read while you were serving as an IMLS reviewer. In addition, pending applications are confidential. Accordingly, you must obtain approval from IMLS before sharing any proposal information with anyone, whether for the purpose of obtaining expert advice on technical aspects of an application or for any reason.

If you have any questions regarding conflict of interest, either in relation to a specific application or in general, please contact Mary Sellers, Program Specialist, at msellers@imls.govor 202/653-4689.

Appendix III

How to Use the IMLS Online Reviewer System

All LB21 reviewers will use the IMLS Online Reviewer System to create and submit reviews. Below are the general steps for using the system. We recommend that you review these steps before you get started.

As a reminder, please complete and submit all your NLG reviews by April 30, 2013.

Logon
To start, go to: https://e-services.imls.gov/grantapps/reviewers.aspx

Your login is: your **e-mail address** on file with IMLS
Your current password is: **password**

When you logon and create your user account, you will need to create a new password.

Accessing the Online Reviewer System

•   Once you have logged into the system, an **E-Review Security Screen** will appear. Read this page and click **OK**.
•   After you have created a new password, your review assignment will appear. To access the list of applications, click **VIEW**.
•   Before you can begin to review any of the applications, you must complete a Conflict of Interest Statement. If you have no conflicts of interest with any of the applicants on the list, click **SUBMIT CONFLICT OF INTERESTS STATEMENT** (bottom of page) and proceed. If you think that you may have a conflict of interest with an applicant, **do not** check the conflict box. Instead, contact an NLG staff member.
•   Now you are ready to begin. Simply click **REVIEW** beside any of the applications.

Note: We encourage you to record your comments in a Word document, and then cut and paste your text into the IMLS Online Reviewer System.

Entering Comments and Scores

•   **Comments** and **Scores**: You must submit comments for each **Review Criterion** for each application. Be sure to save each set of comments by clicking **SAVE** before you move onto to the next criterion. You will only need to provide one overall numeric score for each application you are assigning to review. Click **Application Overview** to submit an overall score.
•   Note: **Funding Priorities** does not apply. Please ignore this.
•   Once you have completed an application review, click the **SAVE & CLOSE** box at the bottom of the screen. This will return you to the **Applications List** and allow you to choose another application to review.

Revisiting the Online Reviewer System

•   With your e-mail address and your new password, you will be able to re-enter the Online Reviewer System and complete or edit your reviews as often as you wish.

•   Once you have logged in, the Security screen will appear again. Click **OK**.

•   Once your review assignment appears, click **VIEW** in order to access the **Applications List** and proceed with the review process.

Completing Your Online Reviews

•   Once you have reviewed all applications assigned to you, the Application Review Status column should read **COMPLETE** beside each application.

•   Please **PRINT** each review for your records.

•   Once you have completed all your reviews, click **I AM READY TO SUBMIT THIS REVIEW TO IMLS** at the bottom of the screen.

Online Reviewer System FAQs

Background:

This system was created several years ago with a Microsoft-based platform. While state-of-the-art at the time of development, it has not been updated. The system still works, but it can be frustrating at first. Once you have a few reviews underway it should prove an efficient process for managing and submitting your reviews. Below are some common user questions.

What web browser should I use?

Since this was created several years ago by a Microsoft-based web developer, Internet Explorer is the only reliable web browser. Unfortunately, Mac users and those using Mozilla Firefox, Apple Safari, Camino, and Opera will most likely **not** be able work with our review system. Also we have heard that Microsoft Vista does not work well either.

Our recommendation is to use Internet Explorer 9.0 or later. *We suggest that you write and save your comments in a word processing program, then once you get into Internet Explorer and the IMLS reviewer system you can cut and paste your remarks in the proper place.*

Do any of the buttons for assistance work? What if I forget my password?

No. Please contact IMLS staff for help if you need your password reset or have any other problems.

What is the best way to get started or comfortable with the system?

Shortly after receiving your packet, try logging into the system and entering some practice remarks to get a feel for the set up and information display. Then, as your deadline approaches, you can focus on the substance of your reviews rather than the process of entering information.

Test out the system early and try to do it between 9:00am and 5:00pm so we are available to assist you.

Keeping Copies of Your Reviews and Assigned Proposals

Keep your applications and a copy of your reviews until April 30, 2014 (in case of questions from IMLS staff).

- Maintain confidentiality of all applications that you review.
- After April 30, 2014, destroy or delete all copies of these documents in your possession.